

PERSPECTIVE

Presence is the best market access

Why Indian companies should be in China before access improves

India bought USD 113.5 billion from Mainland China in FY2024–25 and sells it about USD 14.3 billion. A relationship this deep cannot stay this one-sided, and China needs to offer India better and more predictable access to its market of 1.4 billion people. India's External Affairs Minister pressed China on fair market access and the trade imbalance in July 2026. The less obvious point is that access is not only won in negotiations. It is won by companies that are already there.

USD 14Bn

India's approximate exports to China

USD 113Bn+

India's imports from China

The imbalance

India is competitive in pharmaceuticals, agricultural products, information-technology services, engineering goods and auto components. These are among the sectors where Indian companies find access to China's market hardest, through slow approvals, standards that are hard to meet and informal barriers. Fair access would move the relationship from one where India mainly buys to one where both sides build.

What access should look like

- **Predictable approvals** with published standards and timelines.
- **Equal treatment** for Indian companies, investors and IP in China.
- **Easier business travel** and visas for the people who make partnerships work.
- **A package, not a trade-off:** structured entry for Chinese companies into India's market through partnerships and local manufacturing, matched by better access for Indian companies in China.

Why presence comes first

A company with a partner, a team and a supply relationship in China sees opportunities others cannot, and is heard when it asks for fair treatment. Go and see. Indian auto component chief executives who walked the Beijing Auto Show, then met companies in Nanjing, Suzhou, Shanghai and Shenzhen, came back with real conversations, not position papers. Companies that build a presence early, sell into Chinese supply chains and form two-way ventures will be best placed when access improves.

OUR ROLE

We work in both directions. We help Chinese companies assess India and build through partnerships, joint ventures and local manufacturing, and we help Indian companies find where they can win in China, together with Gao Feng Advisory.

Ask for access. And be present when it opens.

Sources: India–China trade figures as used across The Guild Co. materials; reports of India raising market access and the trade balance with China, July 2026.